



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

Testimony of Senator Van Wanggaard on Senate Bill 555

Thank you, Members of the Committee, for hearing my testimony on Senate Bill 555. This bill restores abilities that off-duty and qualified retired law enforcement officers enjoyed prior to the passing of Senate Bill 93. I am cosponsoring this legislation with Representative Kleefisch, and am pleased to testify in support of the bill.

This legislation does two things. First, the bill exempts off-duty and qualified retired law enforcement officers from "no weapons" postings at private businesses. Second, the bill exempts off-duty and qualified retired law enforcement officers from "no firearms" requirements on school grounds. These exemptions are needed because they correct unintended restrictions that resulted from Wisconsin's Concealed Carry law. When Wisconsin's Concealed Carry law went into effect, it unintentionally created more areas where off-duty or retired cops could not carry. These exemptions would return freedoms that these officers enjoyed under prior law, by allowing them to carry their weapon in the same areas as an officer who is on duty.

It is important that we restore these freedoms to our off-duty officers and qualified retirees for several reasons. Currently, when a cop finishes his or her shift they could be prohibited from entering a gas station or other private business just because that officer is carrying their firearm. These officers would also be restricted from carrying their weapons on school grounds. This would mean cops who finish their shift would have to disarm to pick their child up from school, or to stop and get a gallon of milk at a gas station on the way home. Officers have not had to navigate these restrictions in the past, and this bill simply restores the rights they enjoyed under previous Wisconsin law.

Our officers go through hours and hours of training to learn how to serve and protect those in their communities. Clocking out for the day does not alter an officer's ability or responsibility to serve and protect. Many retired officers have undergone 20-30 hours of training, and if an officer retires and meets all the requirements to maintain their certification, I believe we should honor that. By passing this commonsense legislation and returning Wisconsin to prior law, we can not only lift unintended restrictions from our off-duty and qualified retired law enforcement officers- but also give these civil servants the honor and respect they have earned.

Thank you, Members of the Committee for your consideration of this important legislation. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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